

McKerrell, S. and Way, L. (2017)

[Understanding music as multimodal discourse.](#)

*In: Way, L.C.S. and McKerrell, S. (eds.)*

*Music as Multimodal Discourse: Semiotics, Power and Protest.*

London & New York: Bloomsbury Academic, pp.1-20.

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This is an Accepted Manuscript of a book chapter published by Bloomsbury Academic in *Music as Multimodal Discourse: Semiotics, Power and Protest* on 26/01/2017, available online: <http://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/music-as-multimodal-discourse-9781474264426/>

**Date deposited:**

02/02/2017

**Embargo release date:**

26 July 2018

## **Chapter 1**

### **Understanding Music as Multimodal Discourse**

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#### *Introduction*

Music has been studied from a wide variety of perspectives across the fields as diverse as anthropology, ethnomusicology, musicology, semiotics, sociology, philosophy, popular music studies, and psychology amongst others. Each field has its own approaches, advantages and interests, sometimes taking music as the object of study, and sometimes using music to examine other, often social topics, such as class, race or gender. This book, however, provides what is a relatively unique approach to music stemming from the perspective of the broader principles and concerns of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and social semiotics. Essentially, CDA examines linguistic choices to reveal broader ideological discourses articulated in texts to reveal what kinds of social relations of power, inequalities and interests are perpetuated, generated or legitimated both explicitly and implicitly in text (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001; van Dijk 1993). Some scholars of CDA have pointed to the need to look more at how ideologies are communicated not only in political speeches and news reports, but also through more cultural media like video, posters, computer games and toys (van Leeuwen 1999; Machin and Richardson 2012). These same scholars have also drawn on certain tools, approaches and assumptions in multimodality to show how discourse and ideology can be revealed by closer analysis of communication in images, visual design, television, newspapers, monuments, toys and also in and through music. Approaching music as multimodal discourse is a relatively recent innovation which is informed by various disciplinary perspectives, but is also embedded within CDA which views music as a part of communication often embedded within a variety of modes used to articulate ideology. In this book we seek to contribute to this body of work through a set of

papers which considers music as a communicative element that is embedded in multimodal discourse alongside modes such as text, still images, moving images, colour, gesture and other sounds, all of which contribute to articulating ideological discourses in society.

### *Music, discourse and meanings*

The literature on the study of music and social ideas is contested, plural and messy, drawing on many different theoretical and ideological frameworks. The study of musical sounds however in the social sciences has a long yet thin strand of scholarship. There has of course been much more research focused upon the social positioning, uses and interpretation of music in society, but the strand of work that engages with musical sound itself in the social science tradition has been a rather narrower one. A number of scholars have noted this trend (Frith, 1993), with Goodwin for instance remarking that musical sound is, ‘...usually relegated to the status of sound track’ (1993, 4). Indeed since the development of the ‘New Musicology’ and the increasing prevalence of various types of cultural musicologies in the 1990s and throughout the 2000s, musical sound itself has been in retreat in the published outputs across most musicological disciplines. Often for very good reasons, mostly tied to the shift towards relativism from modernism, and with the spreading conviction across genres, that musical meaning is made in the mind of the listener(s). This was undoubtedly necessary to rebalance music studies away from its restrictive focus upon classical music and the musical work as an object (often simply analysed as a visual object via the musical score), and can be witnessed in the massive growth of culturally sensitive analyses of musical communities, nations, scenes, genres, politics, commodification, and globalization across music studies.

We think there is now the beginnings of a slow pivot back towards musical sound and its role in understanding music in society, but with a relativist’s understanding and attention to the importance of analysis that places musical sounds and structures within the

complexity of social life (see for instance Berger 1999; Tenzer and Roeder 2011; Tagg 2012; Moore 2013). Although a broad essentialization, much of musicology's focus as a discipline has been on the 'what' and the 'why' of music as a cultural object, whereas considering music as multimodal communication shifts the emphasis firmly onto the 'how' and the 'when' of music as communication. That is to say, that this collection takes a position that approaches musical sound as just one part of human communication, and as such opens up musical discourse within a broader framework focused upon how different modes relate and communicate discourses of power, agency and social positioning.

Allan Moore in his (2013) *Song Means* and elsewhere in his publications (see for example Moore 1993; Moore and Dockwray 2008; Dockwray and Moore 2010) offers a robust consideration of music as a form of discourse. Moore's position is not that of a social semiotician, but that of a musicologist of popular music whose work engages very broadly with analytical traditions across and beyond musicology, narrative, metaphor, embodiment and discourse. Moore's approach is perhaps closest to our own in terms of understanding how the mechanism for musical meaning works; he recognises that the body is foundational for meaning and that cross domain mapping shows us that we have the ability to make sense of the world by understanding unfamiliar ideas or sounds in terms of familiar ideas. Moore shows that this therefore destabilizes any notion of formalism in musical analysis because it undermines the idea that music is best understood in and of itself (Moore 2013: 14). As he suggests, musical sound is more semantically ambiguous than other modes like still images or written text. It affords certain meanings in society, and it affords some meanings over others, and not all meanings are possible. Some songs afford a narrow range of possible meanings through their interrelationship of music and language, whilst others are 'under-coded' and afford many more possible meanings. Moore's own system of analysis outlined powerfully in his 2013 book *Song Means*, is a very strong model for understanding music as a communicative act. This volume however is differentiated from Moore's

approach because we approach music as a communicative affordance from a discourse analytical tradition, valuing musical sound primarily for its communicative power and as an attempt to better understand its collocation and relations with other modes as part of wider multimodal discourse.

On the subject of the relationship between popular music (hereinafter pop) and politics specifically, there is considerable debate which has produced no real consensus amongst scholars (Hesmondhalgh and Negus 2002, 7). Some scholars have been highly optimistic as regard the ability of music to represent and promote socio-political interests or particular cultural values (Korczynski 2014; Lorraine 2006; Shoup 1997). However, other scholars have rather pointed to its limitations. Frith (1988, 1981) and Street (1988) highlight how production and promotion, by large corporations, along with social and consumption contexts constrain potential meanings in pop. Though constrained by its institutional context, the music industry does not necessarily control music ‘unless the stock market is offended’ (Street 1986, 107), resulting in subversive politics being a part of some pop. Though countercultural pop is incompatible with conventional politics (Street 1988; Frith 1988, 472), it can articulate some politics better than others such as nationalist struggles (some black music), the politics of leisure (youth cults and gay disco) and has been powerful in particular ways such as in shifting the social discourse on gender (Frith 1988, 472). Even when pop is political, it tends to be highly populist rather than about specific issues (Way 2016; Street 1988). These studies suggest lyrics are highly ambiguous and the way they are performed, and marketed, plays a big role in how they are received. Pop musicians often allow a sense of being anti-mainstream and anti-authority within an ambiguous counterculturalism, where this is indirectly connoted rather than specified, knowing that their fans will value this counterculturalism whilst simultaneously holding down mainstream jobs and with broader personal investments in ‘mainstream’ capitalist society.

Researchers from various disciplines note that much of pop's political power lies with listeners, meanings being ambiguous and open to individual interpretation. Hebdige (1979) demonstrates how music is used by some as part of a self-imposed exile from mainstream culture. Street (1986, 7) claims pop's politics are related to 'the way private feelings are tapped by the song [and] are linked to the public world'. Grossberg (1987) argues that pop's politics are played out in the activities associated with different tastes of music. Similarly, Huq (2002, 96) argues that rave music is less about conventional politics and more about the politics of pleasure.

There is also much debate concerning pop and authenticity. To understand the discourses of authenticity, which are particular to each genre of music, is to understand the deeply emotional shared connections we have to music. Today, authenticity across many musical genres has shifted from being understood as located in musical objects, to being constructed in and through music as a social discourse. Much has been written on the subject including its usefulness (see for instance Moore 2002; Taylor 1991; Peterson 1997; Redhead and Street 1989; Burns 2007). Recent studies have found it useful to view authenticity as the quality of 'sincerity' or 'playing from the heart' that listeners ascribe to performers (Moore 2002, 210). How this is assigned is socially, historically and genre dependent. Historically, the scholarship of authenticity had its roots in the Romantic tradition where artistic creativity was seen as coming from the soul, as opposed to something which emerges from society (see Machin 2010). These beliefs contributed to the dichotomy of authentic versus 'establishment', allowing some pop to link authenticity with anti-establishment discourses. Rock's authenticity for example, is still very often located in countercultural ideologies (Machin 2010; Frith 1981). Gilbert and Pearson (1999, 164-165) note that 1980s authentic rock entailed singers speaking the truth of their (and others') situations representing the culture from which s/he comes and the presence of a specific type of instrumentation. Indie rock differs, where authenticity is about purity not found in

“high-tech manipulations of large scale production” and “defined in opposition to the commercially influenced” (Hibbett, 2005, 64). Alternatively, hip hop authenticity is articulated through lyrics which reveal personal truths, representing a geographical background linked to lived experiences in predominantly Black urban neighbourhoods (Fraley, 2009, 43). Artists, record companies and their managers use semiotic resources such as music, looks and styles to articulate these discourses. Musical authenticity then, is today properly conceived of as a social process of continual renegotiation of the shared ‘truths’ and canonical values of a particular musical community. In this collection we position authenticity as a still essential concept for understanding music as multimodal communication and Way (this volume) examines various types of authenticity articulated in a protest music video. We believe well-informed CDA can add to the study of music through the systematic analysis of music inherent in CDA’s approach to textual analysis. So it is this approach we turn to next.

### *Critical Discourse Analysis*

CDA and Halliday’s functional grammar start with the idea that linguistic choices made by text producers reveal obvious and not so obvious discourses in texts. By discourses, we mean “complex bundle[s] of simultaneous and sequential interrelated linguistic acts”, which are thematically interrelated (Wodak, 2001: 66). These discourses can be thought of as models of the world and project certain social values and ideas which contribute to the (re)production of social life. Compositional choices in texts have political repercussions (Kress, 1985: 3). For example, naming a member of the *Palestinian Liberation Organisation* a “freedom fighter” or a “terrorist” carries with it political significance. Texts recontextualise social practice (representations) which are transformed dependent “on the interests, goals and values of the context into which the practice is recontextualised” (van Leeuwen and Wodak 1999, 96). CDA also emphasises an examination of context. This is because CDA

perceives discourse as a form of social practice or action, something people do to, or for, each other (van Leeuwen, 1993). It is closely interconnected with other elements of social life (Fairclough, 2003: 3) where “[...] discourse constitutes social practice and is at the same time constituted by it” (van Leeuwen and Wodak 1999: 92). Due to this close dialectical relationship, both text and context are important in any conception of CDA (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Fairclough, 1995a: 62).

CDA also has a political stance, one which is critical to those who abuse power. It has been argued that all scholarly discourse and textual analysis are socio-politically situated, selective, limited, partial and thereby biased (Richardson, 2007; Fairclough, 2003). Choosing a critical approach provides “a scientific basis for a critical questioning of social life in moral and political terms, e.g. in terms of social justice and power” (Fairclough, 2003: 15). So, research should question and not support unjust aspects of social life. According to Wodak:

‘CDA may be defined as fundamentally concerned with analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language. In other words, CDA aims to investigate critically social inequalities as it is expressed, signalled, constituted, legitimised and so on by language use (or in discourse)’ (2001: 2).

Here we see CDA’s concern with relations between language and power, a sentiment echoed by many CDA scholars (Richardson 2007; Bishop and Jaworski 2003; Wodak and Fairclough 1997; van Leeuwen 1993). In fact, CDA prioritises a political commitment. Van Dijk (1996) highlights that scholars who apply CDA start by identifying a social problem with a linguistic aspect, choose the perspective of those who suffer the most then critically analyse those in power, those who are responsible and those who have the means and opportunity to solve such problems (cited in Richardson, 2007: 1; Wodak, 2001: 1).



Most CDA studies concentrate on news and political speeches. It has been argued that political discourses should be investigated not just in these but in entertainment media (Machin and Richardson 2012) where they are also disseminated and legitimised. This is because the press, broadcast news and internet news websites are only some of the outlets where political ideology is circulated. Research using CDA has demonstrated how cultural texts (broadly defined) such as war monuments (Abousnnouga and Machin 2010), video games (Machin and van Leeuwen 2005), sound (Roderick 2013), colour (Zhang and O'Halloran 2013), clothing (Bouvier 2017) and television reality programmes (Eriksson 2015) can construct ideology. In fact, in 1920s Europe, 'art and architecture, as well as music, were used as central parts of communicating fascist ideology' (Machin and Richardson 2012, 331). These studies and others use CDA for examining more than just written language, but other modes of communication as well.

As far back as 1996, Kress and van Leeuwen in *Reading Images* (1996) and *Multimodal Discourse* (2001) demonstrated how meanings in texts are created from not just written language but through other semiotic resources such as visual features, material objects and architecture. According to Machin (2013), these two works were groundbreaking because they introduced the idea to linguists that visual features, material objects and architecture create meaning, not just written and spoken language. These books also emphasise that communication was moving from monomodal to multimodal, partly due to technology. Overall, their work is attributed with pointing 'to the possibility of a social semiotic approach to different forms of communication that allowed not only deeper analysis, but as in linguistics, a more systematic level of description. And this is where its strength lies' (Machin 2013, 348).

Multimodal Critical Discourse Studies (MCDS), with its origins in CDA and Halliday's (1985) functional grammar, assumes linguistic and visual choices reveal broader discourses articulated in texts (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001). In this collection, we define a

mode not to be corollary with a channel of human perception (sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell) but as a socially agreed channel of communication. Analysing texts multimodally can reveal how various semiotic resources, or modes, play a role in articulating ideological discourses (Kress 2010; Machin 2013). In practical terms, MCDS gives us a chance to take advantage of CDA's systematic analysis, that is, by "taking the power of description so useful for drawing out buried ideologies in linguistic-based CDS to be applied to other communicative modes" (Machin 2013, 348). MCDS has the advantage of revealing the way each mode works to articulate discourses "on a particular occasion, in a particular text" (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001, 29). Machin and Mayr argue that the task of MCDS is to draw out the details of how broader discourses or the "scripts", the "doings" of discourse are communicated and how the different modes play different roles (2012). According to Machin, "What is of foremost importance in MCDS is the way that different kinds of semiotic resources can be used to communicate the scripts of discourses in this process of deletion, addition, substitution, and evaluation, that is recontextualisations" (2013, 353). It is our belief that musical sounds also play a role in recontextualisations. In the chapters in this book, we find that authors use the MCDS approach in various ways and to varying degrees, though each have in common analysing music critically and in great detail. This allows the study of music to harness the critical analytical potential of CDA.

### *Music and Multimodal analysis*

Until very recently, there has been very little attention paid to the social semiotics of sound within multimodal texts. Multimodal analysis, and indeed social semiotic treatments of music have been theorized primarily upon the static, and interrelated modes of written text and image. Much of this work in multimodality has relied on homologous relationships frozen in time, although embedded in complex social life. Whilst we acknowledge that our own role as interpreters of signs changes in different contexts and times, much of the

literature of multimodality considers fairly static texts such as posters, paintings or road signs. This is one reason why sound, and more specifically music, has not been fully theorized in multimodality and its significant social semiotic power is largely absent from many analyses of important social discourses such as those about power, ethnicity, race, gender and nationalism. Musical experience is very often multimodal, has a powerfully affective role in contemporary society, and has inspired a wide range of semiotic, aesthetic and mystical theories of how it makes meaning in people's lives. Moreover, much of the discourse of multimodal semiotics has until recently, relied upon linguistic models of musical meaning.

Much of music's power lies in its use as multimodal communication. It is not just lyrics which lend songs their meaning, but images and musical sound as well. The music industry, governments and artists have always relied on posters, films and album covers to enhance and make specific, music's semiotic meanings. This book considers musical sounds as one element of larger multimodal texts, examining the interacting meaning potential of semiotic resources such as rhythm, instrumentation, pitch, tonality, melody and their interrelationships with lyrics, written text, image, colour and other modes of communication, drawing upon, and extending the conceptual territory of social semiotics. And it is social semiotics which reminds us of the importance of context in the making of meanings. It is context and our personal auditory experience which shape the sonic affordances in multimodal communicative acts. We believe that music and sound are not trivial concerns for scholars of communication and media, but that they play an important role both as a discrete mode(s) in itself, but perhaps even more crucially, in dialogue with other modes of communication such as image and written text. In some ways, music and sound as a mode of communication allows multimodal texts to account for the limitations of linguistic affordances, often bringing the most affective aspects to multimodal texts. Music can produce broad 'unnuanced' emotions in us such as joy and fear for instance, as well as

simultaneously signal more nuanced memories and emotions attached to individual people and relationships in our lives (see Cook, 2001). Therefore, music within multimodal communication often brings with it particular affordances that are either difficult to express via more propositional linguistic texts or images, or in some cases, impossible to express in other modes.

The literature that examines music as, and within, multimodal discourse is still a relatively novel area of research. However there have been some significant texts in this direction that in our view begins with Van Leeuwen's examination of *Speech, Music, Sound* (1999). Van Leeuwen (1999) identifies six major domains of sound which contribute to meanings. These domains do not dictate what listeners hear but identify experiential meaning potential of the sounds listeners experience (van Leeuwen 1999, 94). This points to the importance of context in being able to make sense of semiotic affordances (meaning potentials), something critics of video analysis also note (Railton and Watson 2011; Shuker 2001; Goodwin 1993). Musicians manipulate such domains as perspective, connoting social distance, music's adherence (or not) to regularity, how sounds interact with each other, melody, voice quality, timbre and the modality of sounds. Machin (2010) focusses these ideas and some of his own and examines how music operates within multimodal texts. Elsewhere, Machin and Richardson (2012), analyse two pieces of music associated with two pre-1945 European fascist movements – the German NSDAP and the British Union of Fascists. Through an analysis of melody, arrangements, sound qualities, rhythms and lyrics, they demonstrate how semiotic resources communicate discourses of a machine-like certainty about a vision for a new society based on discipline, conformity and the might of the nation including unity, common identity and purpose. This article identifies how sounds communicate specific ideas, values and attitudes. McKerrell (2012) analyses the role of the lyrical content, context, performance and subsequent reception and mediatization of a football song in the press, to demonstrate how cultural performance can construct sectarian

difference in the Scottish public imagination. McKerrell (2015) then goes on to examine the construction of social semiotic space and social distance in sectarian YouTube videos. He offers a theoretical model for the metaphorical understanding of melodic and harmonic musical sounds in relation to social distance where proximity to the root chord, or most diatonically stable chords, construct notions of Self and the Other. This shows how the musical sound using the harmonic or melodic distance from the tonic or root of the music as a reading of social distance can be multimodally collocated with the text and images to produce a multimodal text whose combined social semiotic meaning is greater than the sum of its parts. Similarly, musical motifs can be so strongly correlated with textual or visual signs that they can become a 'multimodal synecdoche'; where a discreet sign in one mode can signify a specific semantic meaning in another. For example, the Nokia message alert is now widely heard as a multimodal synecdoche that signifies the owner has a new message on their mobile phone, recognizable to many, simply through a unique combination of musical notes.

Van Leeuwen (2013) argues that music can, and should, be analysed as discourse. He examines a range of sonatas, advertising jingles and news signature tunes. Power, Dillane and Devereux (2013) explore how the singer Morrissey has represented the struggles of the proletariat in a deep textual reading that reveals a complex counter-hegemonic stance on the issue of social class. This is illustrated through a detailed semiotic, musical and contextual reading of a Morrissey song, examining the harmonic and melodic structure, tempo and instrumentation in the recorded song and the visuals in the video, as well as a socio-historical and political contextualisation of the era and the performer himself. Way (2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016) applies van Leeuwen's (1999) categorisation of sounds to a wide range of political popular music videos. These studies demonstrate how music commodities work multimodally to articulate not only political discourses, but also discourses of authenticity. This short list of key articles and books in the arena of music as

multimodal discourse studies shows that there is much work to do both in bringing the best conceptual territory of the various disciplines to bear in considering music as part of a larger multimodal communicative discourse, but also that musically, the analysis has been thus far limited to popular, hip hop, protest, folk, vernacular and advertising or incidental musics, and that the social semiotics of sound within multimodal discourse of many musical genres have not yet been considered. It is timely therefore, to begin to think about what music does uniquely as a mode and relate this more overtly to CDA. This will have the dual benefit of both rehabilitating music into wider scholarly debates about social power and communication and simultaneously opens up social semiotics and MCDS to powerful new ways of understanding human communication.

### *Talk and text in musicology*

Musicology itself has a long and highly complex historiography that places text and talk alongside or sometimes entirely distinct from music. There have been various attempts to understand the relationships between music and other modes in musicology (see for example Leppert 1995; Middleton 1990; Feld and Fox 1994; Tagg 1979). But crucially, because of its focus on music as an object, the formalism inherent in the musicological inheritance from analytic aesthetics and musicological analysis is fundamentally at odds with much CDA and *social* semiotic approaches to analysis. Much has been made of the semiotic connections between music and language (Feld and Fox 1994), and they share some systemic attributes. However, fundamentally, our position is that music is not a language and as such we must pay careful attention to the particular modal attributes in music that mark it out from other modes and give it such emotional and affective power in multimodal texts.

Much semiotic theory of music has started from the position that music can either be, treated as a form of linguistic communication, or is analogous to the extent that it

should be treated with linguistic models (Feld and Fox 1994; Feld 1984; Powers 1980). Good examples of this lie in much of the work on deep and surface structures in musical grammars, Schenkerian analysis, Bakhtinian applications of narrative to musical scores, and almost all structuralist approaches to formal analysis that derive from Saussurian ideas. Musicology has had a very long history of treating music as an object, which has largely been enabled by visual analysis of musical scores. This focus on the visual has encouraged the belief that, ‘...what is in the score wholly specifies music’s identity and content’ (Leech-Wilkinson 2013: 219). In fact, the evidence from discourse about music, as well as the affective experience of musical discourse itself, supports the idea that music is not ‘a language’ in the linguist’s sense. That is, the commonly accepted sense of a language as a form of communication of propositional concepts and ideas (Cross 2011), but that music and language share foundational sensorimotor and somatic processes that produce understanding, meaning and emotions.<sup>1</sup>

If one therefore regards musical sound as a distinct mode from sung language (i.e in a song or a music video) another problem arises which is whether sounds we hear are always part of the same musical mode: Do two separate, contrary tunes heard simultaneously suggest two different modes, or are they part of the same complex mode? Can non-pitched, non-lexical vocal sound count as ‘music’ or part of the linguistic ‘text’? One critical and certain aspect of musical sound however is that, when audible, it is always heard through time, making it entirely subject to our notions of temporality, and also forcing us to recognise that musical sound, unlike an image or a written word, cannot be perceived statically *through* time, but is always heard *in* time. Long climaxes in music, or the build up of dynamic tension in a film soundtrack really do matter in a way that means that understanding what has come before, and what may come in the immediate future, all figure in the multimodal understanding of the present. It is always disappearing from our semiotic perception and is constantly in a changing dialogue with other modes. Music’s very

immateriality makes it both powerful and deeply temporal, meaning that no multimodal analysis that includes music can really ignore the narrative semiotics of how time, and our semiotic perception of it, changes our perception of a multimodal text. This supports a definition of musical sound as a single mode of communication, because it can always be analysed in relation to other modes in a multimodal text despite the complexities of the aural perception, we always perceive it as one aspect of a multimodal text, constantly moving through time.

However, it is important to note that in certain contexts there may be two modes operating in the audible semiotic space of a multimodal text. For instance, diegetic music in films and television is that music that refers explicitly to something visible on screen such as a door slamming, or a bell ringing. But music can also construct the affective aspects of multimodal texts as non-diegetic music such as an orchestral soundtrack, and thus the audible aspects of a film, television programme or online video can include both diegetic and non-diegetic sounds as different modes in the same communicative context. The auditory channel of perception can also be inherently multimodal in and of itself, when someone is singing (or shouting) over diegetic background music. In these contexts, we must accept that the sounds, although heard simultaneously in time, are part of two distinct socially accepted channels of communication and that the audible elements of the multimodal text can be multimodal in addition to whatever might be going on visually or linguistically.

When someone sings a song, however we have essentially the conjoining of language with melody. This makes song an inherently multimodal form of communication. Therefore, in this book, we recognise that even the audible aspects of a multimodal text such as a film or an online video, may be multimodal even before considering how these relate to the spoken language or moving images elsewhere in the text. The analyst must use their common sense to decide which audible aspects of the text are within the musical mode, and which are



part of another mode, and more importantly; how do they respond to each other in the total semiotic space of the text?

It follows therefore, that we must also be careful not to simply ascribe the same semiotic or discourse analytical methods and concepts transplanted wholesale from linguistic CDA. For instance, we cannot forget that music has many more affordances than language for semiotic meaning, because of its lack of propositional or referential meaning. In other words, we cannot simply make straightforward metaphorical analyses of multimodal metaphors between language and music: rising pitches do not always signify increasing tension; thickly textured musical sound does not always connote semiotic complexity; loud sounds often imply something very public, but not always; and, people understand vocal timbre and meaning in many different and contradictory ways across the globe. As in most text-based CDA, context and collocation are crucially important in any consideration of music in multimodal communication.

Like language, music is not always an aural phenomenon. It can form part of a multimodal text without sound, via musical notation or other visual representations of musical sound. Indeed, there are interesting junctures between language and music particularly focused around linguistic onomatopoeia such as 'boom', 'cough' and 'click', where phonetic meaning is foregrounded. Music and sound can also be heard in different ways depending on the multimodal context. That is to say, that unlike language, to a certain extent what some might recognise as 'music' is not universally shared, whereas in general, most human beings can recognise a foreign language even if they cannot speak it. But importantly, if we regard language as a complex mode of communication that includes signs, signifiers, referents and important characteristics such as double articulation, then in general, music cannot be considered a language, because of its semiotic ambiguity. It is therefore important to understand that music's meaning is not straightforwardly causal within a multimodal text, it is often more constitutive; just in the same way that verbal

discourse constructs emergent socio-cultural identities and meanings, so too does music within complex multimodal texts. This assumption is fundamental to CDA and social semiotics, yet the emergent and social nature of discourse is not incompatible with more structural analyses of how meaning is made. Just as Cameron (1997) has pointed out that the key shift in understanding 'women's talk' and gender relations as social discourse was to move from gender as a causal function of 'women's talk' towards the now widely accepted position of gender as constructed performatively within social discourse (Cameron 1997: 28), so might we move to a more processual understanding of musical meaning in multimodal discourse, whereby music's meanings are emergent and performative, depending largely upon the social and cultural bodies that hear them. Our bodies are cultured, we feel music in different ways according to class, gender, ethnicity, race, place and personal experience.

There is today a growing consensus in musicology, popular music studies, music psychology and cognitive musicology that is placing embodiment at the centre of musical meaning. Johnson supports this view when he says that: 'Music is meaningful in specific ways that some language cannot be, but it shares in the general embodiment of meaning that underlies *all* forms of symbolic expressions, including gesture, body language, ritual, spoken words, visual communication, etc.' (Johnson 2007: 260). Furthermore, Zbikowski recognises this too when he reflects that 'musical meaning is on the whole much less precise than linguistic meaning' (Zbikowski 2009: 395). Music does not have a finite number of signs with propositional meaning that can be combined in a particular syntax for more complex systematized meaning. Therefore, music is not a language in the conventional sense, but it is very definitely a mode of human communication that does emotion and affective meaning particularly powerfully. On this point we find various points of view that conflict. Philip Tagg (2012) for instance suggests that there has been too much logocentric

analysis of music, for him, music should be understood *musically*, because it is a different sort of sign system to verbal language: 'Music is an alogogenic [essentially the 'opposite of logogenic'<sup>2</sup>] sign system whose semantic precision relies largely on connotation and on indexical signs' (Tagg 2012: 160–1). But what this view of communication suggests is that somehow music is a special mode, different from any other type of mode of communication such as verbal language, written text, colour, image, gesture etc. Tagg's own view of music is useful across much social semiotics but we disagree with the notion of music as a special form of communicative act. As Moore so aptly points out in response to Tagg's ambitious methodological research, the problems lie not so much in a logocentric view of music, or in the difference between shared and individual meanings for musical listeners, but:

The problem, I believe, lies not in Tagg's aim, nor in Kennett's critique, but in the assumption of the initial arbitrariness in semiotic meaning, an arbitrariness that then becomes (sometimes) fixed through practice. It is only the least interesting meanings that bear an arbitrary relationship with the sounds of music, and the fixity of meanings that is taken to ensue is illusory (Moore 2013: 221).

Moore is correct in pointing out the importance of intertextuality and in the malleability of musical meaning in society. Indeed, this book can in part be read as an attempt to rehabilitate music into a more holistic analytical system that regards music as just one other mode of communication in a multimodal world. We also suggest that if the cognitive theories of embodiment and conceptual metaphor theory are correct, then all semiosis itself is done in and through our embodied minds via embodied conceptual metaphor and cross domain mapping, which would undermine any kind of special argument for music as a distinct and entirely separate semiotic mode of understanding than other modes. Our point here however is to emphasize that music is not a language in the linguistically normative sense, but that it is a communicative mode, and that its very semantic ambiguity and sonic

presence lends it a particularly powerful affective role in communication, where it has very fluid affordances, which are highly adaptable in multimodal texts. In essence then, this is the same position as outlined by Moore, however where we differ from his rich conceptual treatment of music as semiotic communication is in essentially what is considered 'music'. Moore considers the sung text of songs as part of the musical mode; we consider songs as essentially multimodal texts because they combine sung or spoken text with musical sound; music with words. In this way then, it is possible to consider the text of a song as part of a larger multimodal whole, especially for instance when watching a music video or a film where other modes such as moving images and still images, and gesture and colour are also often present. And this is why we take issue with Tagg's position, because we consider musical experience to be almost always a multimodal experience anyway, and that as analysts, it is worth understanding the ways in which musical sound interacts with other modes and because a multimodal approach can bear rich insights into the socio-cultural understanding and significance of human communication. All this is important therefore because it affects not only the methodological approach to analyzing how music does ideological and cultural work in multimodal texts, but also because it is crucial to understand that musical sound, because of its very malleable affordances, offers a particularly emotionally powerful aspect of many texts: The film soundtrack can reinforce or destroy a sense of intimacy in a scene between two lovers depending on how we understand the sonic aspects of the text; music has been shown to make us buy more (or less) in supermarkets and is now increasingly used in online retailing; the music associated with political campaigns is often a shorthand way for politicians to acquire cultural capital from artists for their own political gain. Music is important in our lives because we often share values embodied in sound, however tacit these may be, and multimodal critical discourse analysis is emerging as a novel, interdisciplinary and multifaceted method for deconstructing these power relations in text.



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<sup>1</sup> We take meaning (after Johnson 2007:268) to indicate embodied semiotic experience that includes qualities, emotions, concepts, propositions, abstract reasoning, feelings, metaphors, image-schemata, etc., which acts across modal domains.

<sup>2</sup> See Philip Tagg's own definition on his website: <http://tagg.org/articles/ptgloss.html> [date accessed, 07/12/2015].